

five days later, quietly, routinely, and for nothing more than the price of a first-class stamp, the checks were returned to my door by our regular mailman.

LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVES AND CONSERVATIVE-LIBERALS

it seems to me a bit inconsistent that republicans do not trust in the goodness of human nature where the poor are concerned but do trust in the social responsibility of corporations.

democrats, of course, reverse the inconsistency.

BEYOND B.F. SKINNER

i'm watching a rented video of 'round midnight with some local writers in a midwest city and the young french guy has just kicked down the lock of the door of the hotel room in which the black parisian landlady has been keeping dexter gordon imprisoned for his own health, not to mention his earning power,

and someone says, "i don't understand the point of all this,"

and i say, "the point of the film is freedom and dignity, precisely those conditions that b.f. skinner says contemporary man must relinquish." well, contemporary man has pretty fucking well relinquished them. but this french kid is saying that the jazz man must be allowed his freedom and dignity, must be allowed to be a man, even if such freedom virtually assures his early self-destruction. it is what existentialism was always all about. it is what john stuart mill was about. it is what clockwork orange is about. it is what john milton and john locke and even jonathan fucking edwards were all about. it is what billie holiday was about and john coltrane and the bird and bud powell — it is simply what JAZZ has always been about. it is what FRANCE is supposed to be about and it is

what AMERICA was once about and maybe still
is but barely hanging by its fingernails.
but it's not what the insurance companies are
about. and it's not what communism or puritanism
or fascism or just about any "-ism" except maybe
existentialism or individualism are about.
existentialism in fact didn't just say you
could be free — it said you couldn't escape
your freedom, but millions of people are
doing their damndest to.

and a few weeks later my friend cowboy
bob is quietly replying to a drunk lady
who is demanding to know why he is always
getting into arguments and fights, what
exactly it is that he wants out of life,
what it is that he lives for, and
cowboy bob tells her,

"i only live for two things.
the first is freedom.
so is the second."

COPS GET STRESS-DISABILITY PENSIONS

sitting in the waiting room
of the emergency ward
after having thrown up blood
while on anti-coagulants,
an episode he largely ascribes
to the old academic pressures
of overwork and underpay,
and the new one
of committees dominated
by evangelical feminists
and students encouraged to embrace
every current sociopolitical excuse
for their own deficiencies,
toad spies a sign beneath the t.v.
which says, "warning: do not touch,"

but which at first he reads as,

"warning: do not teach."

I WAS ALWAYS THE LAST ON THE BLOCK TO RECEIVE HIS
SECRET DECODER RING

the teenaged counter girl at wendy's
asks, "would you like a discount, sir?"